

# Need Accommodations or Modifications in Housing?

Guide to Requesting Reasonable Accommodations and Modifications

LEGAL COUNCIL  
FOR HEALTH JUSTICE  
Updated Aug 2021



## What are Reasonable Accommodations and Modifications?

The Fair Housing Act (FHA) defines **reasonable accommodations** as changes to rules set by a housing provider to ensure equal opportunity to use and enjoy housing. Allowing a service animal in a building with a “no pet” rule is an example.

**Reasonable modifications** are physical changes made to a dwelling to ensure equal opportunity to use and enjoy housing. Installing a wheelchair ramp is an example.

A request is ‘**reasonable**’ when:

- It is needed to ensure full use and enjoyment of housing
- There is a clear relationship between the request and the disability



## Who Qualifies for Them? Who Provides Them?

Anyone with a **disability** can make a request. The FHA defines a person with a disability as:

- Those with a **physical/mental impairment** that limits major life activities
- Those **thought of** as having such an impairment
- Those with a **record** of such an impairment

The FHA calls for housing providers to offer accommodations and modifications **when requested**.



## How to Request Reasonable Accommodations and Modifications

### Step One: Decide What Changes You Need

Assess your unit and the policies set up by your housing provider. Then, decide **what changes are necessary** so you can enjoy your unit and the grounds. You do not have to make a request upon moving in—you can make it at any time.

### Step Two: Communicate with Your Housing Provider

The FHA does not require you to make requests in a certain way. Each housing provider might have their own methods for submitting requests, though. Check with your provider beforehand.

However, housing providers **cannot refuse requests from those who do not follow their methods**.

### Step Three: Submit Your Request

Making a **written request is the best practice**, but is not required. In your request, name yourself as someone with disabilities under the FHA and answer these questions:

- Are you requesting an accommodation or a modification?
- What specific changes are you requesting?
- Why are these changes necessary? How will they help you?

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## Tips for Submitting Requests



### Keep Records of Requests

Records should include a **copy of your written request**, **who** it was sent to, and **when** it was sent.

### Send a Support Letter

It may help to ask your doctor to write a **support letter** to your housing provider. The letter should:

- Be on official letterhead
- Confirm that the person requesting a support letter meets the FHA's definition of disability
- Explain the relationship between the disability and the need for the requested change

### Work Together

Requesting an accommodation or modification means **engaging in an interactive process with your housing provider**. You may have to meet many times to work out the details of your request. Do not compromise on a different change if it will not meet your needs.

*The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has a sample request letter you can use:*

[bit.ly/HUDLetter](https://bit.ly/HUDLetter)



*The Chicago Housing Authority has their own request form for those living in public housing:*

[bit.ly/CHAForm](https://bit.ly/CHAForm)

Send the form to [hcv@thecha.org](mailto:hcv@thecha.org). You can also make a request at 312.935.2600 or via TTY at 312.461.0079.



## How to File a Complaint

A housing provider **can deny a request** if:

- The request was not made by or for someone with a disability
- There is no disability-related need for the change
- The change puts an extreme financial and administrative load on the housing provider

If you feel your housing provider or property owner has **wrongly denied your request** for an accommodation or modification, you can file a complaint with **the Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity (FHEO)**.

### Online

File on the HUD's website:

[bit.ly/HUDComplaint](https://bit.ly/HUDComplaint)

### Phone

Call an FHEO intake specialist at **1.800.669.9777**, the regional FHEO office at **312.913.8453**, or by using the HUD's toll-free teletypewriter (TTY) line at **1.800.877.8339**

### Email

Complete the HUD complaint form:

[bit.ly/HUDForm](https://bit.ly/HUDForm)



Email to:  
[ComplaintsOffice05@hud.gov](mailto:ComplaintsOffice05@hud.gov)

### Mail

Send the HUD form to:

**Chicago Regional Office of FHEO**  
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development  
Ralph H. Metcalfe Federal Building  
77 West Jackson Boulevard,  
Room 2101  
Chicago, Illinois 60604-3507